

TRANSPORTATION VISION

By 2035, St. Croix County has an efficient, economical, comprehensive, multi-modal transportation network that includes on-demand transit available between all villages and cities. St. Croix County consistently maintains and improves the county road system to meet identified needs. The County has worked with St. Croix municipalities to identify safe roads to establish bike lanes. The County works with municipalities to plan for residential growth and transportation access in tandem. The County is exploring options to provide and adapt to individual transportation choices including various modes of mass transit in addition to bike and pedestrian options. County residents are utilizing the new St. Croix River Crossing from Houlton to Stillwater. Local and county land use plans and ordinances address existing and future land uses related to the crossing. Transportation routes are efficient and well-planned providing good connections between St. Croix River bridges and the rest of the county.

Introduction

Transportation facilities have a significant influence on land use, development, and quality of life for County residents. This section includes a review of transportation facilities found in St. Croix County, including highways, rail, airports, bike facilities, pedestrian facilities, and transit. Transportation types primarily off-road and recreational in nature, such as snowmobile, ATV, and hiking trails, are not discussed in this section, but can be found in the community facilities and natural resources sections.

St. Croix County, its local municipalities, and the State of Wisconsin together provide nearly the entire roadway infrastructure for inter-county movements, intra-city movements, and the demands



of new growth. This road system also allows the movement of buses, bicycles, and pedestrians. A well-maintained and planned transportation system can aid in economic development, support a variety of land uses, provide links among community facilities, and facilitate the provision of various public and emergency services.

This element will function as a guide to identifying the County's existing and proposed road network, identifying major transportation needs, and

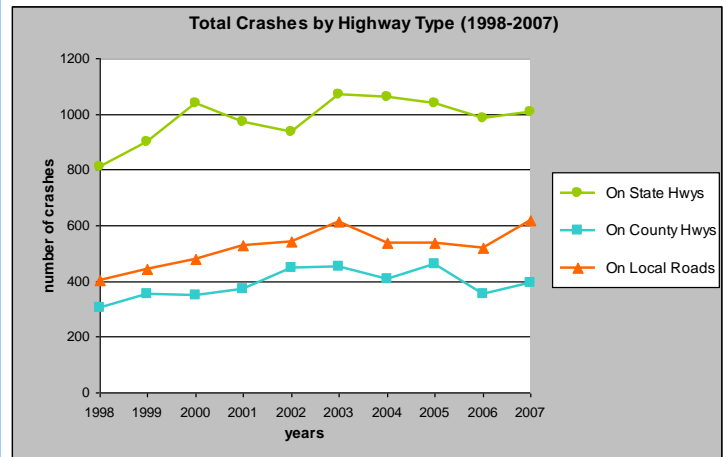
supporting the goals and objectives of the other elements of the St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan.

This section was drafted in the context of regional, state, and national transportation planning guidelines and principles. Numerous existing State and local transportation plans of regional significance are considered in the development of this plan. Transportation issues, needs, and strategies specific to individual communities will be addressed in their respective plans.

Conditions, Trends & Issue Prioritization

Conditions & Trends

- Traffic volumes in St. Croix County have been generally increasing, and numerous improvements have been made or are planned.
- The County's portion of Interstate 94 is the second most heavily travelled segment of interstate highway in the State of Wisconsin, with projections exceeding 85,000 vehicles per day at the St. Croix River bridge by 2020.
- Vehicle crashes on public roadways increased nearly 33 percent from 1998 to 2007. Crashes on local roads (not State or County highways) increased approximately 53 percent. However crashes on state and federal highways have steadily declined since 2003,
- Despite numerous transit services for elderly and disabled clients, the demand is growing and will be challenging to meet in upcoming years.
- More residents work outside St. Croix County than inside. Only 18.7 percent of employed residents work in the same town, village, or city where they live.
- The New Richmond Regional Airport is the 5th largest municipal airport in Wisconsin.



Top Issues

- 86% of county residents are satisfied with the current road network, but 66% feel increasing traffic volumes are a problem.
- Over 55% of survey respondents would like expanded public transit options. Expanded commuter rail (Twin Cities to Eau Claire) is a potential transit option.
- Residents are divided on commuter facilities, with 40% saying they are adequate, 30% indicating they are not and 25% in the "don't know" category.
- Construction of the St. Croix River Bridge crossing is an issue of continuing concern to many St. Croix County residents.

Implications

- The availability of other modes of transportation such as transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities may need to be modified as more people use these modes out of necessity, environmental concerns, convenience, or for health reasons.
- Key to the future of transportation in and around St. Croix County over the next several decades is increasing commuter traffic, aging of the population, the rising cost of operating a vehicle and changing technology.
- All incorporated communities currently have a State highway which passes through their communities. With increasing traffic volumes on most of these highways, the potential for pedestrian-vehicle accidents is increasing.
- The growing elderly population in St. Croix County will continue to place increasing demands on specialized transportation services.

Special Subsections

Transportation related analysis, programs and policies applicable to the County are identified within the *St. Croix County Conditions and Trends Report*.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: *Provide a St. Croix County transportation system that is safe, convenient, efficient, accessible, and sustainable while meeting the multi-modal needs of residents and the traveling public and enhancing their quality of life.*

Objectives:

- 1.1 Support multiple modes of transportation, appropriately address user conflicts, protect our resources, and improve the quality of life of residents through the planning and development of transportation projects, facilities, and policies.
- 1.2 Provide affordable and accessible transportation and transit services in an economically sustainable manner for all residents.
- 1.3 Consider freight rail, passenger rail, and airports as important parts of our transportation network.
- 1.4 Continue to strive for a safe, accident-free transportation network.
- 1.5 Integrate the county and local road system with planned federal and state highway improvements for an efficient road network.
- 1.6 Manage the overall road system with a variety of techniques to maintain capacity at or above projected traffic volumes and limit traffic congestion.
- 1.7 Control access throughout the road system in areas of higher traffic volumes to ensure the access, mobility and safety of affected road segments.
- 1.8 Continue to foster and support the economic goals of our county in the planning and development of our transportation system.
- 1.9 Recognize greater energy savings and fuel efficiency as a crucial component of the transportation network.

Goal 2: *Provide neighborhoods and communities in our county that are efficiently connected with each other and the region, moving people and freight through a variety of transportation modal options.*

Objectives:

- 2.1 Integrate alternative transportation modes, as appropriate, including pedestrian, biking, ride-share, transit, freight rail, passenger rail, and airports etc., as an important part of services.
- 2.2 Integrate the planning and design of major transportation facilities and surrounding land uses to protect the functionality and safety of the transportation improvements and to develop sound land use patterns.
- 2.3 Encourage intergovernmental cooperation, at all appropriate levels, and planning as crucial to ensuring a connected, consistent, safe, accessible, and effective transportation network.

- 2.4 Coordinate and cooperate in the provision of transportation services with municipalities within and surrounding the County and with neighboring counties, the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota.
- 2.5 Develop transportation modal options for commuters and other riders in our county to efficiently and sustainably connect neighborhoods, development areas, and communities within the county and region, as well as better connecting our county to the Twin Cities, the West Central Region and the Midwest.
- 2.6 Work with local communities and state and federal agencies to implement the St. Croix County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- 2.7 Provide for the safe and efficient movement of commercial freight and long-haul truck traffic through St. Croix County and local municipalities.

Goal 3: St. Croix County will work to maintain, sustain, and enhance our multi-modal transportation infrastructure and services in an economical manner.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Maintain, preserve and enhance the county's existing transportation infrastructure and services, including highways, railways, bike, pedestrian, transit, air and water systems.
- 3.2 Continue to develop and maintain a functional and jurisdictional classification system to ensure overall highway system performance.
- 3.3 Keep the highways in St. Croix County clear of obstructions for safe travel and maintenance.
- 3.4 Explore alternative funding sources for the maintenance and enhancement of our transportation network.
- 3.5 Strive for consistency between transportation decisions and the provisions of all applicable short- and long-term land use and development plans, considering the effects of each on the other.
- 3.6 Strive to protect property values along transportation corridors.
- 3.7 Continue to support the New Richmond airport as an alternative transportation hub.

Policies

Intergovernmental Cooperation

- 1.1 The St. Croix County Transportation Committee will provide guidance and oversight to implementation of this plan.
- 1.2 The county will work with the local governments, neighboring counties and the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota to determine, and plan for, necessary improvements to the transportation system in St. Croix County.
- 1.3 In cooperation with WisDOT, MNDOT and other units of government the county will identify and preserve reasonably needed transportation corridors, to avoid future conflicts between land use and transportation needs.
- 1.4 The Transportation Committee and Highway Department will seek input from public stakeholders and other entities regarding transportation issues.

- 1.5 The county will continue to incorporate state standards for defining functional and jurisdictional classification of highways and consider jurisdictional transfers when appropriate.
- 1.6 The county will encourage the state to consider local planning findings, goals, objectives and policies when planning major transportation facilities.
- 1.7 The county will strive to maintain appropriate levels of service on highways under its jurisdiction and will encourage other jurisdictions to maintain adequate levels of service.
- 1.8 The county will coordinate and encourage regular, ongoing discussions between the county, towns, cities and villages on strategies and actions to correct and prevent road name and address duplication to improve emergency response time and service.
- 1.9 The county will work with economic development agencies on transportation issues.

Highway

- 2.1 The St. Croix County Highway Department will continue to utilize programming, planning and budgeting to develop and update the multi-year highway improvement plan for the county–trunk system.
- 2.2 The St. Croix County Highway Department will continue to update its construction, maintenance and safety plan to guide the department in ongoing management of the county–trunk system.
- 2.3 Continue to utilize required federal, state, county and local standards, manuals and criteria for planning, inspection, evaluation and construction of roads and bridges.
- 2.4 Continue to follow Wisconsin statutes and federal, state, county and local standards, manuals and criteria when managing highway right-of-way encroachments and safety issues.
- 2.5 Continue to work with the St. Croix County Planning and Zoning Department in the development and enforcement of ordinances regulating driveways, highway setbacks, signage, access and safety issues.
- 2.6 Continue to work with the St. Croix County Planning and Zoning Department to consider developing and adopting an official map to assist in planning for, designating and protecting roadway corridors for planned road expansions and extensions.

Commercial Freight/Agricultural Equipment

- 3.1 Truck routes should be on the most appropriate roads in order to minimize truck noise and safety impacts and reduce wear on roads that are not suited to heavy vehicle traffic while connecting to commercial activity centers.
- 3.2 Keep truck traffic and related industries on identified truck routes.
- 3.3 Consider the commercial freight industry in the design of intersections and roads connecting to designated truck routes to support the freight industry.
- 3.4 Agricultural equipment will continue to utilize roadways and will likely continue to increase in size and width. To facilitate safe and courteous travel for both vehicles and agricultural equipment the County should educate by providing information and signage regarding agricultural equipment travel on roadways, safe passing actions and limitations regarding size and weight of equipment. Information should be provided utilizing tools such as the County's rural living guide, website, public access cable channels and other electronic media.

Rail

- 4.1 Encourage and support improved safety at rail crossings by implementing rail-crossing improvements when recommended by the Wisconsin Railroad Commission.
- 4.2 Work with the Western Wisconsin Passenger Rail Coalition and the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative to promote the development of high-speed passenger rail service to western Wisconsin.

Transit/Commuting

- 5.1 The county will stay informed and work with regional efforts to provide transit options to workers commuting from St. Croix County to the greater metropolitan centers.
- 5.2 The county will continue to support and actively promote the construction of the new St. Croix River Crossing at Houlton.
- 5.3 The county, working through the Aging and Disability Resource Center, will continue to support and provide transportation services for elderly and disabled residents and explore opportunities to expand these services.
- 5.4 Continue to support and encourage park and ride lot and carpooling program development in appropriate locations.
- 5.5 Explore transit options to include telecommuting and the expansion of current levels of service and to reduce the current levels of commuting.

Bicycle/Pedestrian/All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV)

- 6.1 The county will continue to encourage implementation of the St. Croix County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- 6.2 Develop the county bikeway system with varied facilities according to traffic volumes, road conditions and available trail routes.
- 6.3 There is no County authority to allow All-Terrain Vehicles on county roads, so ATVs are not allowed on county roads except to travel across them and when licensed as a piece of farm equipment.

Air

- 7.1 The county will continue to promote and encourage use of federal and state funding to provide freight and passenger air services at the public and private air facilities.
- 7.2 The county will consider the commercial air passenger and freight industry in the design of intersections and roads connecting to the airport facilities.

Multimodal

- 8.1 Encourage the establishment of sustainable local funding sources.
- 8.2 Conduct county-wide transportation planning activities in a comprehensive, highly coordinated fashion to maximize connectivity, efficiency, and integration in land use and development plans.
- 8.3 Consider all transportation modes in design, review and development and ordinance writing and updates.
- 8.4 Support the use of energy-efficient vehicles by County Departments.

- 8.5 Support educational and enforcement efforts for multimodal and energy usage options by county departments.

Transportation System

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